

# STYLED IN FIBERGLASS

THE CHRIS CRAFT  
COMMANDER CLUB'S  
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

FOUNDED 1999

Fall 2012



## Inside This Issue

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From The Chief Commander	3
From The Crew	4
Hall Of Fame Award—Robert Cutchins	7
Companion Door Bliss	8
2012 Rendezvous	10
It's A Dog's Life (Jacket)	11
The History Of Chris Craft	13
What's In A Name	14
The Dock Box	16

## From the Chief Commander



### Something New On the Horizon??

Back in the very first days of the Commander Club, we started with about 10 members exchanging e-mails about our boats and all things Commander by sending individual e-mails to every member. Every time someone new joined we had to add that person to every member's e-mail address book. This soon became a giant pain and co-founder Rob Cutchins set us up with a list service called E-Groups, which functioned just like Yahoo does today. You could send an e-mail to E-Groups and they would forward it to all members, a giant step forward.

On Feb. 15, 2000 Rob sent our first message using E-Groups:

Hi,  
This list service is sponsored by The Chris Craft "Commander" Club, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of the classic fiberglass cruisers built by this world-renowned company in the 1960's and 1970's  
Cheers,  
Robert Cutchins

This move really helped us grow and was instrumental in the development of the club. In March, 2001, E-Groups was acquired by Yahoo, and now we were part of the newly formed "Yahoo Groups" where we currently remain. This relationship with Yahoo has been both very good and at times, very frustrating. At one point we no longer had the ability to post and retain attachments such as pictures, although this feature was ultimately reinstated. Overall, however, Yahoo Groups has served us well over the years. However, therein lays a problem – "*Over the years*". Yahoo has remained relatively stagnant for a long time. Additionally, your EC is well aware of repeated member problems and dissatisfaction with Yahoo and some of its deficiencies.

Currently we have three separate and distinct functions on the Internet – Our Website, Yahoo Groups, and our Membership Database. Two of these, the Website and our Database require a high level of computer skills to create and manage. This is somewhat of a problem, as not many of our members have these skills and are willing to devote the considerable amounts of time to maintain them. Fortunately, there are alternatives available today that do not require high skill levels to create and maintain, and even better, allow all three of our current separate functions to be incorporated into one site.

The Executive Committee began investigating these new entities back in 2010. We are currently seriously looking at a social networking site called "Ning". Here is what Wikipedia says about Ning ---

**Ning** is an online platform for people and organizations to create custom social networks. Ning offers customers

the ability to create a community website with a customized appearance and feel, feature sets such as photos, videos, forums and blogs, and the service layers in support for "[Like](#)", integration with [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Google](#) and [Yahoo!](#).

Our Webmaster, Alarik vonHofsten has created a Ning test site that the EC has been "test driving" since January of this year. Since September, a small group of club members we call "Beta Testers" have joined the EC in testing Ning. They have been instrumental in identifying features that are good, features that are less desirable and suggesting other functions that will enhance member satisfaction should we ultimately decide to abandon Yahoo & migrate to Ning. The final decision is yet to be made, but I thought this would be a good time to inform the membership of a very important project and possible change in the near future.

Webmaster Alarik has prepared a very detailed migration plan with clearly defined actions and timelines. We are currently about 35% into this plan. Sometime in December, based on both EC and Beta Tester input and experiences, the EC will make a final decision on whether to migrate to Ning or stay with Yahoo. Stay tuned! Possible exciting changes on the horizon!

Dick Morland \* Chief Commander

PS:

To all of our CCCC friends, best wishes for the Holiday Season from Patty, our two Goldies, & me.

## COMMANDER CLUB MISSION STATEMENT

The Commander Club is a “virtual club”, existing on the Internet. The club is a non-stock corporation dedicated to the preservation, study, and appreciation of the classic fiberglass Commander boats built by the Chris Craft Corporation. Our goal is to inform and enlighten owners or enthusiasts about these classic fiberglass boats. Members shall be Commander owners, enthusiasts or other persons who support the mission of the club.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

#### CHIEF COMMANDER

Dick Morland  
Elgin, IL

#### ARCHIVIST

Charlene Pike  
Royal Oak, MI

#### WEB MASTER

Alarik Von Hofsten  
Bromma, Sweden

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS

Pam Sorensen  
Schaumburg, IL

#### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Marcia Elkins  
Huntsville, AL

#### TREASURER

Mike Schrage  
Gross Pointe Park, MI

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## From The Crew



### A Word From The Editor

When I was selected for the role of Public Relations Chairperson, I knew I had some pretty big shoes to fill, and frankly, I was pretty intimidated by the size of the task ahead of me. But then I thought, I have never shied away from a challenge in the past, so why start now.

A Little About Me... In 1991, I bought my first boat, a much neglected 1956 26' Chris Craft Com-muter. She was mahogany, had the beautiful bull nose, twin 105hp engines, and would have made a better anchor than boat when purchased. It took several years, and lots of help from my family, but after replacing lots of wood, sanding, varnishing,

and painting, she was launched. Her new given name was “Endeavor”. She floated, with help from a bilge pump, but she floated, just the same.

My next challenge was the journey into the world of the Chris Craft Com-mander. My parents were sitting on the back of their 1970 Chris Craft Com-mander in 2001, when this beautiful 1967 38' Chris Craft Commander Sedan motored into the marina. I signed the papers in a week. She had definitely seen better days, but as with all classic boat owners, my “Potential Gland” was in overdrive. I knew she would be gorgeous when finished. She turned out pretty darn well, after serious cosmetic upgrades and repowering. Her given name was “RNR”. While she was beautiful, it became clear that I needed more room, since I use my boat as a summer home. Fast forward a couple months and my next Com-mander. She is a 1977 410 Com-mander and her name is “Soaring Sun”, which has actually been the family boat name for 40 years. Again, as with all my boats, she has seen better days but she is coming along nicely.

We've had several significant issues

that had me out on the window ledge on several occasions. With the feedback from this club's membership, my faith has been repeatedly restored, allowing me to climb in off the ledge.

I keep these experiences in the back of my mind when working to bring this club to larger audiences. I know, first hand, the value of this club AND it's members. This club is filled with roll-up-your-sleeves folks that have been there and done that. We have grease under our finger nails and paint in our hair and that's what makes this club great.

I look forward to serving as your Public Relations Chairperson and welcome your feedback. You are invited to contact me directly at CaptPam@comast.net with questions or suggestions.

I hope you enjoy this volume of Styled In Fiberglass.

Pam Sorensen \* Public Relations

## From The Crew



A Word From The Archivist

## Awards Presented for 2012

Several well-deserved awards have been presented during 2012. Information about the award and their recipients is below.

### Leadership Award

On behalf of the Chris-Craft Commander Club, we present Whitney

Pillsbury the Leadership Award for his service as a member of the Executive Committee as Membership Chair 2007-2011 and Public Relations Chair 2011-2012. We appreciate his dedication and loyalty to the club.

The growth and success of the Chris Craft Commander Club is largely dependent on having strong and capable leaders and the entire club recognizes the contributions Whitney has made in helping our club reach our goals.

We congratulate Whitney on this achievement and thank him for his service.

### Awards Of Distinction

The Chris Craft Commander Club is pleased to announce the Awards of Distinction presented at the 2012 Rendezvous in Detroit, MI.

Kean's Marina - In recognition and appreciation of their support of the 2012 Chris Craft Commander Club Rendezvous

Robert's Riverwalk Hotel and Residence - In recognition and appreciation of their support of the 2012 Chris Craft Commander Club Rendezvous

Lee Dahlen - In recognition and appreciation of his continued support and dedication to the members and mission of the Chris Craft Commander Club, for being the top SuperDisc poster for four years, a SuperDisc top 10 poster list member for six years, and as guest speaker at the 2012 Rendezvous.

Jena Neisler - In recognition of her dedication to the promotion and preservation of the Chris Craft Commander line of pleasure craft by actively participating in several Commander and CC "Woodie" restorations.

Char Pike \* Archivist



A Word From The Membership Chair

Our membership continues to steadily grow. The number of people that have joined the club, by year, are noted below:

2007 – 101 (The membership database was created in 2007)

2008 – 157	27 – 8	38—11
2009 – 162	28 – 2	41—13
2010 – 159	31 – 19	42—11
2011 – 140	32 – 2	45—1
2012 to date – 108	33 – 6	47—5
	35 – 10	50—1
	36 – 2	

Of the members that have joined the club this year, 3 were looking to buy a Commander. The other new registrants are broken down by boat length below:

23 – 2
26 – 1

Marcia Elkins \* Membership

### From The Crew



#### A Word From The Treasurer

As of the end of October 2012, the Club's cash balances totaled \$14,500.

This reflects an increase of approximately \$3,000 from the last time I reported in the Winter 2011 edition of Styled.

One-third of the increase relates to tax refunds we've received from the IRS now that the Club has tax-exempt status.

The remainder of the increase relates to Café Press, Super Disk, and Resource Disk revenue that exceeded the Club's expenses for the year.

Once the year is complete, we will prepare and post a complete financial statement on the Club's business forum which can be found at: <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/ccccbiz/>

Mike Schrage \* Treasurer



#### A Word From The WebMaster

##### A Tough Market

Cynics will tell you that there are only two moments when a captain will feel true and unconditional joy. First when he just bought a new boat and the second time is when he just sold the boat. No wonder the "boats for sales section" is by far the most visited section on our public website.

Each year I help members post about 30 new for sales ads. Each ad page is visited 500-1000 times depending on model and asking price. It probably makes us the largest marketplace for Commanders in the world. No wonder that many sellers tell me that their ad on the Commander site provided by far the highest response,

and the most serious response at that. So does this mean Commanders are easy to sell and to buy?

I think most sellers would argue that it takes too long time to sell. Finding serious buyers rather than "fenderkickers" is tough. Although many boaters love the classic lines of the Commanders many also hesitate when considering hefty maintenance and restoration fees, possible engine replacement etc. Naturally sellers also want to recover all costs they put into the boat. And this is where the the matching between sellers and buyers come to a grinding halt. But things are changing.

Sellers are beginning to come to grips with the difference between what their boat might have cost them and what others are actually willing to pay. Hence, in the last 12 months asking prices have come down considerably. Consequently the number of Commanders actually sold in the last 6-12 months has increased dramatically. It is hard to make exact calculations how much prices have

come down but it is my impression that asking prices for many Commanders today are 20-50% lower than a couple of years ago. Naturally this is not something sellers like but will have to get used to.

For the buyers on the other hand this is good news. You can get an awful lot of boat for comparatively little money. In many cases this leaves the buyer with more cash left for maintenance or even full scale restorations. Thus, more of these fine boats will stand a chance of being around for a long time to come and hopefully in better shape. For the cause of the this club - the preservation of Chris Craft's fiberglass cruisers in the Commander line - this must be good news after all.

Alarik von Hofsten \* Webmaster

### Hall Of Fame Award—Robert Cutchins

Dedicated, organized, collaborative, caring, creative and self assured are words used as a testimonial for granting Robert Cutchins the Chris Craft Commander Club Hall of Fame Award.

Rob has served the Commander Club since 1999 in many ways: Webmaster, Editor, Founding Member, Public Relations Chair, rendezvous host and Superdisc manufacturer.

As most members of the Commander Club do, Robert Cutchins brought specific talents and vision to the club during its inception in 1999. What arose out of a simple Google search on Chris Craft Commanders by him, led to what we know today as the Commander Club's online presence. It was Todd Heinrich's vision that led to Robert using his talents in web design and IT to offer up his services in creating an online presence. Starting in 1999 with a small EGroups forum to help spread Todd's word in finding other Commander owners quickly grew into what we know today as Commanderclub.com.

Robert designed the first website, also integrating it with the Yahoo! Groups forum - which still exists today. Seeing a need for archiving this most valuable information contained in the forum discussions, Robert was also instrumental in developing the very first archive disk known as the Classic library.

Other things he is well known for in promoting the club's presence include:

- developing the first Commander Club apparel (with the assistance of his partner Jamie)
- hosting the 2002 Rendezvous in

Portsmouth, VA

- serving on the original "Board of Governors" as well as the "Executive Committee" until 2011
- restoring 3 models of Chris Craft Commanders with his partner Jamie Rolison, including a 1966 27' Express "Bobbie-G"(named after his father who also had a love for Chris Craft boats), a 1968 31' Express "Conference" (now owned by Drew Fitzpatrick and named Tenacious) and finally, since 2004, a 1968 42' DCMY "Command Performance"
- representing the Commander Club on collaborative projects with other organizations such as the Mariner's Museum and Boat U.S.

It is no secret to anyone in the Club that Robert has both a passion and a drive to not only see these boats exist, but to see the Club thrive and

prosper for future generations to carry on the Commander Club tradition. What you don't know about Robert is that while devoting his time and talents to the Club, he also plays organ for 2 churches every week, holds down a full-time position in the human resources department of a local Norfolk hospital, sits on various civic groups and organizations in his hometown, and also finds the time for local charity work. Top all this off with a close knit family life. He and his partner Jamie now reside in his childhood home in Portsmouth. His mother Helen and sister Kendall live within the same city block.

Robert Cutchins' dedication to promoting and preserving the Chris Craft Commander line of pleasure craft and the Chris Craft Commander Club is appreciated and admired.

Therefore, it is with great celebration that we induct Robert Cutchins into the Chris Craft Commander Club Hall of Fame.



### Companion Door Bliss —

Submitted By: Chris Orphal

#### A Guide to Slick Strip Installation on the Companion Door of a 42 Commander Double Cabin

When I first bought my 1967 42 Commander, the side (companion) door was a little tough to open. Over the years, the issue became more and more annoying, and finally in 2011 I took the door out of its home (along with the track) to see what I could do to fix it. Was it just a roller that needed to be replaced? Were there bearings of some sort on the top, or was there something on the bottom of the track that was damaged? Nope. No bearings or rollers, and nowhere to put them. In fact, there was no room to put any such item in to improve my situation. I put it back together and continued to stew on this for the next many months – hating the door every time I used it.

Earlier this year, the value of the CCCC once again came through with a post from a fellow member. He explained my exact symptoms – grinding door, feels like sand or gravel in there, even if you take it apart and clean it. He mentioned a product called Slick Strips, and beamed about how it made the door slide open with 2 fingers. TWO FINGERS? I could break as many trying to get mine open. I couldn't believe it. In another couple days there were confirming posts of this miracle cure. I decided to give it a shot.

During a "vacation" working on the boat, and with an ice cold adult beverage, I gathered the materials, and went at it. To say I was happy would be a severe understatement. I took pictures along the way and here they are... a "Guide to Companion Door Bliss"

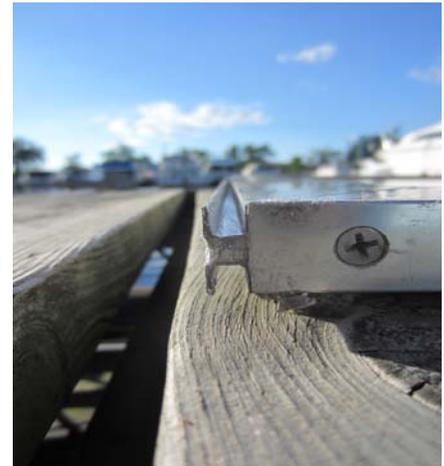
**Step 1.** Order the Slick Strip. Hit the web and do a Google search for "slick

strip" or UHMW Slick tape. You will find several places that sell it. You'll need half inch wide and as thin as you can get it. I ordered 1/32" thick by 1/2" wide in a 50 foot roll (yes, I overbought, as you will only need about 10 feet – or less)



**A picture of the freshly removed "C-Channel" that attaches above the companion Doorway**

**Step 2.** Remove the side door assembly. No need to remove the bottom.... Just slide the door back all the way, and take out as many screws as you can get to. Slide the door forward and repeat. There are a total of 10 screws that hold the C-channel in place. Once the screws are out, the door will lean toward you, and you can remove it. Careful, it's heavy, and I would also try to support the door from the bottom if possible, so as not to put too much strain on the fewer and fewer screws that will hold the C-channel in as you remove them.



**A picture of the freshly removed "I-channel" at the top of the sliding door.**

**Step 3 –** Gather the following materials: Slick Strip, 409 (or your favorite degreasing cleaning product), a short shaft flat blade screw driver, paper toweling, and a new razor blade (I used a carpet cutter because it is easier to hold and get a grip on).



**A picture of the necessary supplies (sitting on the door).**

*(Continued on page 9)*

# Styled In Fiberglass—Fall 2012

*(Companion Door Bliss—Continued from page 8)*

**Step 4 – Clean.** Because of the nature and small size of the C-channel, it is very difficult to clean. Do your best. For the I-channel, spray the 409 in the track groove, fold over a paper towel a few times, and put your screw driver into the groove. With a good amount of pressure, work the screw driver back and forth until the track is clean. You might have to do this several times to get all of the gray/black buildup out of the track. Flip the door over and repeat on the other side. **BE SURE THAT THERE IS NO BLACK OR GRAY LEFT... ONLY A NICE CLEAN ALUMINUM SURFACE.** Also, be sure to dry the surfaces well.



**Cleaning out the I-channel on the companion door. The screw driver works well to get the gunk out of the corners.**

**Step 5 – Slick Strip installation.** The slick strip comes with an adhesive back. From the roll that you order, cut a length of slick strip that will fit in the entire length of the track. Remove the adhesive backing and gently lay the slick strip in the track. **MAKE SURE THE ADHESIVE SIDE IS AWAY FROM THE BODY OF**

**THE DOOR** (stuck to the top of the I channel)! Put the screw driver into the track and turn it slightly to put pressure on the Slick Strip. Push down on the Slick Strip while following down the length of the track. This should give the Slick Strip a good grip on the track.



**A picture showing how I used the screw driver to put pressure on the slick strip after the adhesive backing was removed.**

**Step 6 – Trim.** The half inch slick strip is just about half out of the track and will need to be trimmed for a nice close fit. Press down on the Slick Strip (to make sure it stays seated at the bottom of the track), and hold the carpet cutter at a 90 degree angle to the slick strip. Slowly slide the razor down the length of the slick strip, ensuring that the slick strip is not coming up, and that you are cutting flush with the aluminum.



**A picture showing how I used the carpet cutter to trim the “top” of the Slick Strip off.**

**Step 7 - Flip the door over, and repeat steps 5 and 6.**



**A picture showing the installed Slick Strips (translucent white on the underside of the I-channel.**

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Styled In Fiberglass—Fall 2012

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(Companion Door Bliss—Continued from page 9)

**Step 8** – Slide the C-channel over the I-channel and set the door in place.

**Step 9** – Put the door back in place. Be sure you have the correct screws to hang your C-Channel – they should be 1 ¼” #10 flat head stainless steel screws. Mine were #8 oval head stainless steel and were only 1” long. **FLAT HEAD IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY BECAUSE THERE IS VERY LITTLE CLEARANCE, AND EVEN LESS WITH THE SLICK STRIPS ON.**



**Shows the C-channel surrounding the I-Channel, and the Slick Strips.**

Companion

Door

Bliss!!



**The screws – The correct one to use is on the right – 1 ¼” #10 flat head stainless steel.**

And that's all there is to it. It should take you no more than about 30 to 45 minutes to complete this task, and you will absolutely be able to open your companion door with two fingers. It's that simple. I for one still smile now when I open that door!

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## Rendezvous 2012—Commanders in the “D”



On August 2nd, the 2012 Rendezvous began in Detroit, Michigan and a good time was had by all.

Some statistics about the rendezvous:

1. 159 people attended (25 first time registrations, 62 total registrations)

2. 32 boats attended  
3. We had registrations from the following states:

AL - 1; AZ - 1; CA - 1; FL - 4, IA - 1, IL - 4, MD - 1, MI - 38, MO - 1, NC - 1; OH - 6; ON - 1; TX - 1, VA - 1

Mike Schrage took videos throughout the weekend, including Lee Dahlen's sessions, and those videos can be viewed on YouTube.com at

<https://youtube.com/user/commandersinthed>

Photo albums of the festivities and boats were uploaded to the club's Facebook page at:

<http://Facebook.com/ChrisCraftCommander>

You do not have to be a member of Facebook to view this page and the albums.

# It's A Dog's Life (Jacket)

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the June/July 2012 edition of BoatUS Magazine*



GOOD  
FOUNDATION

BoatU.S. FOUNDATION FOR  
BOATING SAFETY & CLEAN WATER

BY CHRIS EDMONSTON

### FOUNDATION FINDINGS #52

**The last thing we want is for Fido to fall overboard, creating panic onboard, and a potential safety nightmare. Fitting him for a life jacket is easy – really! – if you follow a few simple tips**

Some of the most important safety items on any boat are the life jackets — for you, your passengers, and of course your “best friend.” Since our last report on this topic 12 years ago, canine life jacket market has taken off by leaps and bounds

Back in 2000, we came up with four viable canine life jacket models. This time, we were easily able to double the number of tested. West Marine has many in regular stock, and so do some of the big-box. While it might seem as if all dogs have an innate ability to swim, many dogs simply don't take well to water. Dogs with low body fat, such as grey-hounds, or dogs with age or health issues may have trouble. Jackets are a good idea even for dogs that love the water. A long day in the water can get tiring, even for the best swimmers — a fact that was proven on our day of testing. Most of our test jackets came in a variety of sizes, so we were able to try them out on a variety of dogs — from a 12-pound rat terrier, to a 130-pound Newfoundland, and six other dogs in between. There are also different types of foam and construction materials in use today, as well as an inflatable model. With prices ranging from about \$20 to more than \$100, there's a vibrant dog-PFD market,

and a jacket for every budget.

### SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE PURCHASING

Is the dog likely to jump in the water? Is the dog heavy? Will the dog want to lie down, or will it be active? If you can, take your dog to the store to try on the jacket, or at least make sure you can take it back. See how the jacket fits, and how hard it is to adjust for a good fit. Check where the straps hit — you don't want the straps or buckles rubbing sensitive parts. Also, you'll want to check the way the foam padding rides on the dog — too much foam in the wrong place will make it uncomfortable, if not impossible, for the dog to sit or lie comfortably.



*Stella models the Kurgo Surf N' Turf life jacket.*

One feature that testers found universally important: a lifting strap/handle. If you've ever tried to pick up a swimming dog, you'll agree that having a lifting jackets handle makes getting the dog back into the boat much easier. If your pet needs to be on a leash, having a ring on the collar is another important feature. Safety features to consider include having reflective tape and a jacket made of bright colors to make it easier to spot the dog in the water in adverse conditions. And keep in mind, if the jacket has Velcro-style closures, your dog's shedding might clog it up, and necessitate frequent cleaning.

### SMALL DOGS

Our small dogs, a 12-pound rat terrier (Spring), and a 20-pound Jack Russell (Skipper), neither of which are “water” dogs, had decidedly negative outlooks on taking a plunge. Because they were small, active dogs, there was less wiggle room for a poorly fitting jacket. Everything from strap and buckle location to amount and placement of the foam had to be just right for the dog to be comfortable. The jacket that best suited both dogs was the West Marine neoprene jacket (\$34.99), which just edged out the Outward Hound (\$15.99).

### MEDIUM DOGS

Our medium dogs, a 36-pound border collie (Zip), and a 40-pound golden

## It's A Dog's Life (Jacket) ~ Continued



*Spring, the rat terrier, models his elaborate life jacket.*

retriever pup (Stella), seemed to be much more willing to take a swim than our small dogs — not much of a surprise, especially for Stella. There's a substantial size difference between a small and medium jacket, and the fitting was easier for Stella and Zip than it was for Skipper and Spring. The jacket that best suited both dogs was the Outward Hound priced at \$29.99, which just edged out a foam jacket from West Marine called the Pet Flotation Device (\$24.99), or cleverly called the "PFD."

### LARGE DOGS

Our large dogs, a 62-pound golden (Jackie) and a 70-pound golden (Guinness), were more at home in the

water than they were on the shore. The large jackets tested had a greater amount of surface area, which is one thing to keep in mind on a hot summer day, especially for our friends that sport a little more fur. The jacket that best suited our large dogs was the Outward Hound (\$23.99), because of overall performance for active dogs in the water. That was followed

by the economical West Marine Pet Flotation Device (\$24.99) — the same results as for the medium-sized dogs.



*Here's Jackie, wearing an Outward Hound jacket.*

### EXTRA-LARGE DOGS

Our biggest dogs, a 90-pound Chesapeake Bay retriever and a 130-pound Newfoundland, were very comfortable in the water. Jackets for these dogs seemed to be the most forgiving for

getting a good fit.

Adjustments, when needed, were made easily, and the price for the jackets averaged around \$50. The jacket that best suited both (\$28.99), just beating out the MTI Adventure Wear Underdog (\$39.99) and the Kurgo Surf n' Turf (\$58.99), which were tied for second place. All three of these jackets did an exceptional job at keeping these heavy dogs'

hind section afloat, leading to a more horizontal and natural swimming posture while in the water, which greatly reduced fatigue.



*Murphy, the extra-large Newfoundland, wearing a Kurgo Surf n' Turf.*

### TOP CHOICES

The Jackets we tested performed differently based, in part, on the size of the dog, so we broke down our test results on jacket size, rather than brand. We rated on a 1-5 point scale, with 5 being the best score. The six scores for each jacket were then averaged for the final score. Jackets were rated on the following factors:

- > ease of fit and adjustment
- > comfort when worn dry
- > adjustment needed when wet
- > swimming characteristics and water performance (how well the jacket floated the dog or helped its ability to swim)
- > Observations from the dog's owner

### The History Of Chris Craft

Contributor: Jim Wick

Christopher Columbus Smith built his first wooden boat in 1874 when he was 13 years old. He soon began to build more boats and joined his brother Henry in 1881 to begin producing boats full time. In 1910, the brothers joined with other partners to form the Smith Ryan Boat & Engine Company. The company name was changed to Chris Craft in 1924. The Detroit area company became well known for their sleek racing boats in the 1910s and 1920s and Chris Craft became famous for its mahogany hulled powerboats from the 1920s through the 1950s.



The company continued to be independent until it was acquired by Shields & Company and National Automotive Fibers (NAFI) in 1960. They renamed the company Chris-Craft Industries, Inc.

In 1964, Chris Craft launched the all-fiberglass Chris Craft Commander. This dramatic new design was unveiled at the New York City National Boat show, perched at the top of an escalator on a giant, wheeled cradle. This first Commander was a 38' express hardtop with a 13' beam. The line of Commanders soon grew to include sizes ranging from 19' to 60"—all "styled in fiberglass."

Also, under NAFI, Chris Craft started building fiberglass sailboats (Sparkman & Stevens design). In addition, NAFI bought Thompson Boats of NY, which gave them a



ready source of fiberglass runabouts which later became the Corsair and Lancer. In 1968, Baldwin-Montrose Chemical Co., Inc. took a controlling interest in Chris Craft and installed its chairman, Herbert J. Siegel, as Chris Craft's chairman.

The first big input from Baldwin-Montrose was the 1970 styling and price increases that were detrimental to Chris Craft.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, Chris Craft lost market share as competitors with more innovative designs and less expensive manufacturing techniques such as fiberglass hulls came on the scene. Chris Craft ended production of its last mahogany-hulled boat, the *Constellation*, in 1971.



The loss of market share continued until Murray Industries purchased the boat building facilities in Dec. 1981. Murray did not own the name, the service department in Algonac, the engine plant, or the sales of engines. They paid a royalty to Chris Craft Industries on every boat they built, every tee shirt they sold. In 1982 Murray and Genth began to expand and bring back the company with new models, and over the next few years increased the number of manufacturing plants from two plants (Holland MI. and Bradenton FL.) to seven plants in 1985. These plants

included a Houseboat plant in Bradenton FL, a Viking plant in Goshen, IN, and Lakeland FL, a Uniflight/Pacemaker plant in Swansboro NC., and a Uniflight plant in Bellingham WA.) There were even plans for a large yacht plant in Brazil.

Those years '82 to about '87 were fun and exciting times at Chris Craft Industries. Very positive, good products, and good sales. Then the weight of the excessive drain of cash by the top people began to affect the credit of the company. They continued to find credit at higher and higher rates from more and more shady sources. The fatal blow to Murray Chris Craft came from a Saudi royal named Ghaith Pharon. It was he who took CC into Chapter 11 in 1989.

Outboard Marine Corporation (OMC) then bought the company. As with Murray, OMC, did not own the name, the service department in Algonac, the engine plant, or the sales of engines. After OMC went bankrupt in 2000, they were purchased by Genmar, who then sold the Chris Craft division to Stellican, Ltd (a London-based private equity firm). Stellican also purchased the Chris Craft trademark, reuniting the name and the manufacturing back under one roof.

## Styled In Fiberglass—Fall 2012

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### What's In A Name..... Camptown's Lady

Submitted By: JP Duda

I purchased my 1967 FDA 38 3036-R From Capt'n Pam a couple of years ago. The boat has served me well. At the time the boat was named "RNR". Of course, I had to go through the ritual of re-naming my boat. It was difficult to walk around her 3 times with clothes as she was in the water. But that is a story for the B Dock faithful. The appropriate bribes were given to Neptune and Davey Jones. Most if not all of my life I have had the nickname of "Zippity". With a last name of Duda, it was certainly an easy one to kid around with. I didn't think "Zippity"

was quite right for my 38. I have seen many boats with names that somehow are associated with cocktails, or the leisure time activities. I needed something a little different. I have also seen boats with ladies names on them. That is certainly something that might be titled "what started the fight"..... Every boat I have had has carried the same name. I didn't want to have a number behind the name. It just didn't seem right. So "Camptown's Lady" has been on all my boats. I work in the music industry as a piano technician. Every one knows

"Camptown Ladies sing this song, doo-dah, doodah"

That is how my boats have come to be named.....

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### What's In A Name..... Bompa Boat

Submitted By: Chris and Beth Benedict

My grandparents Harvey and Kathryn Amoe lived two-doors down from me and were the original owners of Bompa Boat. They took delivery of Bompa Boat in Holland, Michigan at the Chris Craft factory in the summer of 1969; I was on board for that maiden voyage concluding in Port Huron, Michigan, where we all resided. I was three years old when the boat was purchased. A short time earlier, as an infant, the first name I called my grandfather was "Bompa". Beth and I cur-

rently co-own the boat with my parents Donna and Mike Benedict; Donna is the daughter of Harv and Kathryn. In the fall of 2010 we had the boat painted to restore it to its original color which was so badly oxidized in gel-coat....and we never dreamed of changing the name. My parents now have a batch of grandchildren who enjoy the boat as I did with my siblings and cousins. I would anticipate one or more of them may be the owner someday.

### What's In A Name..... Patty Wagon

Submitted By: Dick and Patty Morland

Patty Wagon ?? Nope, I'm not a cop! Obviously there's more to the story. Back in the early sixties, both before I married Patty in 1962 and for the first 4 years of our marriage I was a big time drag racer. If one wishes to compete at top levels, it gets quite expensive just to maintain & continually update a race car. As a solution, I took a partner in the car. His parents ran the local American Motors (Rambler) dealership in town. My new partner & I really got serious about racing, even to the point of building a trailer for the race car so we no longer had to ground tow it. Just about this time, the Rambler dealership took in a 49 Plymouth station wagon on trade for a new Rambler. This wagon was "cosmetically challenged" with lots of rust and a few dents, so the dealership gave it to us to use as a parts chaser or tow vehicle. Well, that flathead 6 banger wasn't really powerful enough for towing, but since we could use a spare set of dealer plates and were covered under their insurance, we turned this car into a parts chaser.

Patty has always said that she's a gopher – Gofer this, gofer that, etc., etc. It was no different in those days – Patty, please run down to the auto parts store for 8 AC 44 plugs, or something like that. She started being the primary driver of our Plymouth beater, and it soon was known as "Patty's Wagon", which was quickly shortened to "Patty Wagon". Now I'm going to digress and make you car guys & gals cry. We kept Patty Wagon for a couple of years, and then replaced it with something more modern, a 56 Chevy Nomad! You heard me right, a Nomad. This one had a 6 cylinder engine, so to give it a little more performance.

we put dual exhausts on it, plus a close ratio T-10 four speed! This was really Patty Wagon II, and she also ran for parts in this one. When my partner got drafted for the Vietnam war, we sold the race car and Nomad and split the proceeds. Man, do I wish I had the Nomad today!

After a couple of months of no racing, we got a little bored on weekends. My mother at the time lived next to a Chris dealer in Algonquin, IL and one day while visiting her we saw this "giant boat", a 22' Chris Cavalier cabin cruiser sitting at the marina. What the heck, we thought. We're already used to an expensive hobby, so let's try boating. We purchased this fine machine and immediately named her "Patty Wagon". In the next 8 years, we bought six Chris Crafts, each successively bigger and fancier and all carried the name "Patty Wagon"

In 1974 we decided to become sailors on Lake Michigan, so we sold the Chris and bought a 32' Irwin sailboat. We thought it was time for a change, so we named this boat "Sailbad The Sinner". One day later that summer we were visiting old friends on the northern Illinois Chain of Lakes where we boated with all the boats before the large sailboat. We were on a friend's boat in Grass Lake when we saw this awful contraption coming at us. It was an outboard powered raft, really crude & ugly. It had something like an oversized outhouse mounted right in the middle of the raft, and the raft was full of Harley's and what looked to be Hell's Angels. They had a half barrel of beer tapped, and there was some horrible rock music playing. It was a sur-

real sight, made even worse as they met & passed us and I saw the name on the back of the out house – You guessed it! Sailbad The Sinner!! I could hardly wait till the end of the season so I could remove the name on the sailboat and go back to Patty Wagon. Never again will we change, its Patty Wagon forever!!

As a footnote, we had been looking for a nice, single aft stateroom 47 Commander with Cummins engines for a number of years. When we finally found her at the 2007 CCCC Rendezvous in Algonac, MI, the name on the 47 we ultimately bought in 2009 was "Paddy Wagon"!! Pretty close – all we had to change was the D's to T's. It must have been Karma!!

## Styled In Fiberglass—Fall 2012

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**The Dock Box.....**miscellaneous items of interest.

**Member Of The Month:** If you would like to nominate a fellow member as member of the month or perhaps you have an interesting story that you'd like to share with the group, you can self-nominate for Member Of The Month. Please submit your suggestions to [Captam@comcast.net](mailto:Captam@comcast.net)

**Future Rendezvous:** If you would like to host a rendezvous or would like to suggest a location for a rendezvous, drop a line to Pam at [captam@comcast.net](mailto:captam@comcast.net).

**What's In A Name:** We want to hear the story behind the name of your Commander. Send your stories on over and we'll share the stories in future Styled In Fiberglass publications.

